Double Exposure

Mary O. DeWalt Hamilton

Jan. 12, 1947

Ellen
a grand girl with
whom I hope to enjoy a
lifelong friendship
Mary S. R. H.

Mary O. DeWalt Hamilton

☆ ☆

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Not Unlike Day

Not unlike day I watched its run—
Your love! At dawn so all aglow
With shining promise there for me.
It flamed at noon its brightest show
Of light. You said eternity
Could never change the heart of you,
Nor ever could all passing time
While there were seas, or winds that blew,
Or eager fingers penned a line.
The sun of love has run its course
Across a sky of amber rose;
But I must smile, and even force
My hungry mouth to gently close
Your eyes in sleep. The night has come.

Water and Flame

I was the lake still and dark
  And you were the fire tongued and brave;
Mine was the languorous spark
    While yours was the thundering wave.

Your love but briefly must shine,
    Mirage of bright flame on a pool;
Mine is a fixture of time,
    A geyser of fire slow to cool.

Echoes

A sudden strain of music,
A little ghostly sin;
The scent of a gardenia –
And there's remembering.

I loathe my mouth's quick quiver
And fingers clenched in pain,
For what I deemed forgotten
Must rise and walk again.
'Tis strange how birches in the rain

Birch Trees

'Tis strange how birches in the rain
Remind me so of you,
And roses wilting in the sun,
Or lilacs wet with dew.

Perhaps your slenderness and tears
Are birches in the rain,
And know the lilac and the rose
How glad I gave you pain.

A symbol here, this fading rose,
Of love that could not last;
But silver birch trees in the rain
Must haunt me with the past.

First Love

There always is a first love;
    There follows two or three;
But oh, it is my first love
    That never sets me free.

My second and my third loves
    Have counted in my schemes,
But still it is my first love
    Whose lips meet mine in dreams.

Paternal Vigil

Pacing up and down the hallway
    On my tip-toes past each door,
Quivering at a wheezy coughing;
    Jumping at a strident snore.

Long and white the corridor's gleaming,
    Many smells assault my nose;
Doctors strolling by ignoring
    Starched and swishing nurses' clothes.

Would that door but ever open.
    Hell! It must be nearly morn;
Cigarettes have burned my fingers—
    Oh, my son, pray get thee born.

My Love

My love need not have virtue,
    Nor need he be too wise,
But he must have a poet's soul
    And laughter in his eyes;
A craving for the woodlands,
    The sounding of the sea;
A burning urge to grasp the stars,
    To solve their mystery.

Great riches need not lure him,
    Nor yet the dream of fame,
But he must come on eager feet
    When children call his name;
And he must love all wild things,
    Must scorn to give them pain;
His hands with gentleness must aid
    The blindman and the lame.

His creed must not hold anger;
    His humor must be keen;
And he must shun the coward's way
    To hold my high esteem.
My love sounds quite angelic—
    Perhaps I'll change my mind;
The wonder man I finally choose
    Will be the average kind.

Night Sounds

Dearheart—
We heard the secret sounds
That battle in the night:
The barking of a distant hound,
The leaves in rustling light.

Beloved—
We heard the cricket's song,
The big horned owl's faint call;
Our silence lasted deep and long
And thus we heard them all.

Your fingers clasped my own at last,
You held them close and still;
The years dissolved, as in the past
There sang a whippoorwill.

Dearheart—
I noticed not the hush
Of whisperings in the dark,
But sensed your fingers stir to crush
The beating of my heart.

You and I

Your heart and mine
Awinging go together into space;
Your eyes and mine
All beauty see in some far mystic place;
Your lips and mine
In rapture cling as when they first had met;
Your feet and mine
The same paths seek nor falter in their step.
Your hands and mine
May grasp at life and blindly feel their way;
Your mind and mine
Now fearfully approach the parting day.

Question

Just how does a love behave
When it verges on the grave?

With success can it deceive
Someone aching to believe?

Does it sulk and nurse its hurt,
Fake a sudden dying spurt?

What the sign when love has come
To the finish of its run?

Reunion

You said,
"I think we've met somewhere?"
I murmured.
"Yes, how time can fly!"
And you
Were cruelly unaware
How long it
Takes quick love to die.

Careless Love

So we part
On friendly terms,
Nothing more to say;
You may now another claim
On your careless way;
Live to love, yet love in vain
Just as yesterday.

Should we meet
In later times,
Should I drift your way,
We may find our love the same –
New bright moments gay;
Live to love, yet love in vain
Just as yesterday.

Chance Meeting

It was not meant that we should meet
And being introduced part hastily.
Encountered on a busy street,
All unforewarned my senses flashed alive

And singing rose in aria gay;
Surprised that after long repose they still
Could challenge this awakened day.
What was it that I found again in you

To so accept and love you there,
Though you heard not my silent cry of need
And protest, achingly aware
Of wasted years in which I knew you not?

Now futile dreams command me pause,
For having seen your mouth I visualize
Our kiss; an all sufficient cause
To sternly censor further thought of you.

Although I've known you briefly,
As measured time will state,
I've waited countless ages
A love that came too late.

But Not for Me

Foredoomed was I to love a lifetime through—
Ah, who but you?
Now lost through fate, convention, what you will,
There lingers still
Profound conviction in my riven heart,
The careless start
Of love was in the meeting of our eyes,
And my surprise
Was more complete when meeting with your mouth.
Far to the South
The birds less swiftly fly than thoughts of you.
It is not true
That here lies hope as my thoughts fleetly wing,
Though they may sing
And soar while dreaming of your reckless smile;
For all the while
I know you will return with heart blown free
Of love for me.

Snow

As cigarette smoke whirling
Aimlessly there,
A powdery swirling
Filling the air;

As ballet girls twirling,
Drifting the park;
As silvery moths flying
Lighting the dark;

As downy soft feathers
Rustling at dawn;
As tears on my lashes
After you're gone.

Your Literal Love

Loving you! Of course I will
On all my sunny days.
Hurting you! I s'pose I do
In many little ways.
Teasing you! That's part of it,
But here I lie bereft;
When I told you where to go—
You took my word – and left.

Fickle Then Am I

If fickleness be loving you until I die,
In constancy, with every thought
A fear that you may love me not;
If fickleness be longing; fickle then am I.

If fickleness be patience, praying trustingly,
That you may speak in ardent tone
A word to ease my hours alone;
If fickleness be credence; fickle I must be.

If fickleness be hunger, a diet to reduce
The heart to starved, constricted pain;
The mind to arid waste inane;
Then I am fickle and concede your one excuse.

Peace

The world was beautiful tonight,
Though no moon shone and stars were dim;
I walked a hundred miles it seemed,
And felt my soul alone with Him.

No scented flowers, no requiem;
May I in death as quietly go,
And as serenely lie in peace
As did tonight the wanton snow.

The Miner

When entering the mine at dawn
 A lamp gleams from your head;
You bear a pick to dig in Hell
 To earn our daily bread.

Each dusk my youth returns with you,
 Each morn I aged grow,
For I may languish in the sun
 While you lie crushed below.

My mind is filled with falling rock,
 With gas, with flood and flame;
In dreams I strive to reach you there
 But ever strive in vain.

If you were but a sailor boy,
 A farmer with his plow,
But I must love a miner lad
 With lamplight on his brow.

Prayer

Together for evermore–
  Just you and I.
If under a storm-swept or
  Bright sun-filled sky,
While walking in rain, or the
  Moon's gentle glow;
If watching swift lightning or
  Soft falling snow;

When talking at night, or if
  Loving at will;
In laughter or sadness, then
  My prayer is still–
Wherever we be, though in
  Strange mood or place,
My hand may be raised to the
  Touch of your face.

The Knockout Punch

Deep anger raised his head,
While shame and loud despair gave cry;
All confidence dissolved in tears;
Chagrin stood sadly by.

To love we wave farewell;
Our hearts may break to quickly mend;
But oh, the lasting hurt to find
A friend is not a friend.

Error

He kissed me then and left me,
    And I think perhaps he knew
That my heart was all aflutter
    With the very thought of you.

I kissed you then and told you
    That my heart was yours for keeps,
And I think because I miss him
    I've been hating you for weeks.

My Garden

Weeds grow in my garden
Among my choicest flowers,
Their growth is quite astounding
Especially after showers.

As I pull I wonder
Why costly seeds I sow
Yield not to cultivation
As all the weeds that grow.

I must be so punished
For little lies I've told;
As weeds which fill my garden,
They grow a hundred-fold.

Redemption

An angel cast his eyes down on
The earth and turned to Him,
Who heard with comprehending smile
The angel speak of men;

"As I now see them, Oh, my Lord,
Although they weep and mope,
Their one true virtue I respect
Is never-ceasing hope."

The Friends of Folly

The friends of evil Folly
Are Conscience, Fear, and Doubt;
They wander through my livid dreams;
They follow me about.

My Courage in the daytime—
Bravado donned and spurred,
While Accusation waits and leers
And Guilt retards each word.

The friends of vital Courage
Are desperate Love and Need;
They bolster in my darkest hours;
They wrap me as a creed.

But as my days go forward,
Will Courage still defend?
Can artful Folly and his friends
Defeat me in the end?

Plane at Night

Inertia soothes me as I nod.
The farmhouse den with cozy fire,
The kitten licks and smooths her fur;
I read and smoke my aged briar,
And heaping on the window-sills
Without, the snow in silent maze
Is falling softly through the night
While moon and stars lie deep in haze.
But faintly comes an alien sound,
A humming breaking through the storm.

The cat and I in stiffened pose
Have ceased to dream. This place where warm
Fire-shadows writhe across the walls
Forgotten lies. I scrape the frost
From off the pictured window pane,
The dim red light above is lost;
And, though I strain each sense to hear,
The motor fades into the gloom
To leave me pacing restlessly
The limits of my tiny room.

If It Could Be

Could I kneel at your feet
Without losing caste
In your lonely dark eyes
So scornfully veiled;

Could I lift up my voice
In a plea for your love
With the hope of success
Where before I had failed;

Could I know that your faults
Your virtues exceed
And let scorn curl my lips
In place of desire;

Could I fathom the depths
Of your strange cold allure,
Would these strange longings cease
And this torment expire?

Could I do all these things
To discover you mine,
Would you change and appear
As just any tall lad?

And what then could you give
With the battle once won
That would so stir my pulse
As the heartaches I've had?

The Good Things

Good music, love, a cup of wine
Are all I need –
A pleasant time.

If it be with a handsome lad
What more need I
To make me glad?

Yet home, soft lights, a book or two
And my own thoughts
Will see me through.

Method

It's very seldom that I ever
Permit a man to think I'm clever:
In dreamy and attentive mood
I sip his wine, consume his food;
I sit enthralled, demure and charming;
I am his understanding darling:

I feed him half-baked compliments;
I sprinkle him with condiments;
It works each time without a hitch,
I am a fascinating – witch.
He never sees in eyes half-veiled
My other loves as lightly held.

Poor Simile

It's love in the mansion or love in the hut;
What matters the stanchion that's holding it up?
For love is the same as a new-minted dime,
And who shall be blamed if it tarnish in time?
Yet strange as it seems the statistics will show,
And false to our dreams as to life's even flow,
A love may grow sated on riches and wine;
May smother in boredom and lessen with time.

Love seldom comes laden with pearls or with gold,
And such is a coffin where dreams whitely fold;
While mansions are rare, are found seldom at hand,
The cottages blossom all over the land;
And love has been proved to wax fertile and strong
With nary a plot to plant pansies upon;
While love in the mansion wastes sterile and forced,
And even may end as a matter of course.

No, love in the mansion has not the duration
Of love in the cottage, and there builds our nation.

The Wishing Star

A star had appeared and derisively winked,
To hide in the tallest pine tree;
And I said to my heart,
"Be quiet, lie still!"
But my heart would have none of me.

I wished on the star in defiant resort;
The star sidled quickly from view,
And I said to my heart,
"Stop lurching, desist!"
But my heart was obsessed with you.

The star winked again with elusive delight
When merged with the shadows you came;
And my heart said to me,
'Stop trembling, I knew
That our Love would return again."

I Will Hold the Stars

It's starlight love you offer,
The glimmer chill and faint;
While I must writhe in longing,
To meditate distraint.
Yet through this lost perfection
There sighs your heart's despair,
The need for wild surrender
With stardust gathered there.

In new and hushed forbearance
I wait the certain hour
When firmament lies fallen
And each star is a flower
I touch to find substantial,
Without the fear that dawn
Will melt each flame-tipped petal,
And with them you be gone.

Bon Voyage

I love you much too well –
And lost you. Now nostalgia
For those farewell hours
Engulfs me as the
Smothering avalanche.
Oh, could I live them over
I would steel myself to be
As cool as your goodbye,
As indifferent as your kiss,
And as mocking as your words
Which vibrate through the silence
Of these long and wakeful nights.
I would scale the heights of acting
To retain my trampled pride;
I'd beg of you no promises,
And though my heart were anguished
I would smile and shed no tear;
But with a careless wave of hand
I'd wish you "Bon Voyage!"
At least I hope this is the way
I'd say goodbye again!

A Mother's Wisdom

The night was deep, so deep,
I heard her moaning sigh;
It pierced my dreaming sleep—
Love's cry.

His promises were glib,
Then through, he primly smiled
And left with shattered faith—
My child.

Might I to her relate
In words both sure and free,
Of a mother once awake
With me.

But youth is strangely proud;
A telling does not teach;
An oldster is not wise
To preach.

To her, in later years,
A daughter's tossing bring
The memory of first love—
The sting.

Return to Me

If it can't be you
I shall go alone;
There is nothing that is anything
Without the tone
Of your deep voice.

When you ceased to love
I was stricken ill;
Anguished, silent, stifled in the shroud,
To lie here still
And without life.

I have sought escape
But the seeress lies;
Comfort barren, surcease never found,
Your face is there
In everything.

Pride is sterile stuff
Tinged with solace slight;
Never can it fill my aching arms.
Oh, end this night—
Return to me.

Shades of Memory

It seems that where the waters deep
Recede and leave but sand,
I find the imprint of your feet,
The modeling of your hand.

And in the particles of dust
That float from sun-rayed skies,
I see an outline of your form,
The gold-brown of your eyes.

But when the sun has slipped away,
And as the darkness nears,
I shudder as the raindrops bring
A vision of your tears.

Yet if the moon I craved has come
In answer to my prayer,
There is within its shadows thrown
The blue-black of your hair.

And thus there will forever be
A you I cannot lose,
And were it but my choice again,
Oh, then whom would I choose?

Farewell

And so – it's farewell to
A voice whose deep tones
Will play on my heart
Until time is no more.
Yea, even in death should
He walk o'er my grave,
My still hands would flutter
To tear at the door
Of wood and of earth that
So hold me from him.
He chose for his armor
A blanket of scorn;
It wrapped him in shining
Invulnerable folds.
Ah, love unrequited
Alone could be borne
By one who will hunger
Forever in pain;
Nor would I creep wounded
To shelter and hide
If he had thought precious
My love for an hour;
And while taking all, had
But left here my pride.

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Poet Seldom Marries Poet

Disillusionment lies in the stuff
From which love is made.
Aesthetic, idealistic we
Of the rhyming words, while
Waiting for love to wing.
Of earthly shade it must not be;
On altars high our hopes are laid;
A harmony of tone must cling
And softly strike a chord,
While inner voices sing.

But in the crowded hey-day
We somehow miss the mark;
The ones we choose to share our days,
The everyday prosaic ones,
Must barber us in shame;
They feed us when we hunger,
But where, oh, where the spark?
As streets absorb the sweet spring rain,
These commonplace, all rational ones
Give substance to our flame.

Double Fatality

Am I still living, well – who may say?
I walk and talk and must eat each day,
And move to finish the listless task;
While torpid heart may in anger ask
The why and wherefore of life and death.
Did he call my name with his dying breath?
As his flaming plane struck an alien sod
Had he time to pray to a weary God?

They laid him down in a shell-torn field;
Athene was using her baneful shield
To aid the foe in that dismal hour.
I loathe the hands which may place no flower
On a grave now facing a foreign sky;
In a loveless void – oh, can this be I,
Who was once commended for joyous pride?
No, interred lies she at her lover's side.

Am I still living, well – who can guess?
In rue of virtue I still possess,
I sometimes wonder how many know
This bitter longing, this hopeless woe;
How many women walk now the earth
As automatons in a barren dearth?
For the men must conquer; the men must fight
And their loveless women will weep tonight.

To That One Found

As lithe and slender as the birch,
With head thrown back, you face the fray.
I have but spent my life in search
Of one whose voice would ring the way
I hear but yours each lonely hour.
I vision you by heart, not eye;
I need no gold and ivory tower
As setting; you fill earth and sky.
The breeze that gently lifts my hair
Brings whispers of your dearness; then
I ask no more than this you share.
The chiseled mouth had touched mine when
I least expected there to find
A haven, warm and rarely sweet;
A search at end for troubled mind.
Oh, was it meant that we should meet
And you not love me, though I plead;
But must I wander searching on
When you fulfill my every need
And light my way from dusk to dawn?

Death of Love

Did love die here with gladness,
Or was its laughter false,
And weeping, languish sadly
With intermittent pulse?
Interred in youth and beauty,
Or was it steeped in age
With lips curled back and cursing;
A snarling death of rage?

A true love lasts the ages through,
The ancients all have said;
What truer love was ever sworn
Than yours, which now is dead?

Age

Age may come all silently
    To face you unaware;
Age may greet you suddenly,
    A shadow on the stair.

Meet it not with aching heart
    But know that youth must cease;
Youth is gaining sorrow now
    When age has gathered peace.

Retribution

This night of softly dripping rain,
I sit in retrospective thought
And count the hearts I've given pain
So carelessly. It mattered not
Until, it seems so long ago,
You touched my hand, and I awoke
To senses stirred. I could not know
Your smile was but a daring cloak
To hide bewilderment and fear,
Nor could you know me proud but lost;
My daytime mettle, night-time tear.
How like two vessels madly tossed
Upon an angry white-capped sea
With all the elements to jest
At each small hope. I think that we
Will soon have earned the harbor's rest,
The torture of averted gaze
Will soon have ceased; I shall be free
To guiltlessly and proudly raise
My lips to you, for all to see.

When Two You Love

When two you love in this sad world,
Convention grieves and looks aghast;
Complains in grave and pious tone:
"You must love one
And one alone."

When two you love, and marriage is
At cost of loving one alone,
You lose, no matter which your choice,
The other's lips,
The other's voice.

When two you love of different mien,
Would not the one then pall in time;
Beset your thoughts in longing sad,
Of wanting him –
The other lad?

And is it wrong to know the lure
Of two divergent loves?
But must the one you then dismiss
And learn to hate
The other's kiss?

Complaint

All the hours I spend in yearning
With an anguished heart –
Surely I at last am learning
We were meant to part.
(But at least you may remember
When you love again,
Somewhere there's a smoldering ember
And a heart in pain.)

There are those who may give lightly,
Just a whim to please;
New love may remind you nightly
I was not of these.
(Truly in a lifetime passing
You may find me rare;
I, who held all understanding;
Love beyond compare.)

Is it then desire that bruises
My remembering,
And propinquity so uses
Every lovely thing?
(Brief the time you were my lover,
Hesitant to weld;
I could not forgive another
Who so trifling held.)

Off the New England Coast

(The spirit of a drowned sailor
speaks to his sweetheart)

If in your garden soft with dusk,
  I touch your hand and breathe your name,
That same sweet garden where we met
  And often in the twilight came
To muse on life, and our content
  In hours of lovingness well spent;

If still you keep our rendezvous
  In that lone spot beside the sea,
If I should come on silent feet
  Would your white arms reach out to me?
Could warm lips know a shadow's kiss
  That once had thrilled to earthly bliss?

The sea was pounding on the rocks;
  You cried to see the storm's wild roar;
The swirling grip of waters green
  Released me lifeless to the shore.
My dear, I knew your mad distress –
  Ah, may you never love me less.

Awake, my love, my nearness sense;
  Shy not the heart within its case
Of loveliness so few possess;
  And may you long to see my face,
Though I, who never said you nay,
  Have put my earthly form away.

If in your garden soft with dusk
  I touch your hand and breathe your name,
That same sweet garden where we walked
  And often in the twilight came;
Will you but fear my cold caress —
  And doom me to all loneliness?

Desire

Gazing out on driven snow,
Thinking thoughts as bleak and white;
Feeling ice within my heart,
Knowledge of this lonely night.

Moonlight bright across my bed,
Rustlings, whispers o'er me sigh;
Warm desire my sleep deters;
You may toss and thirst as I.

Must I ever lie awake?
Love is eager to atone,
But must change to bitter hate
If too long she weeps alone.

We Laughed at Love

Our love was born while yet we jeered;
    We were not young but worldly wise;
We laughed at those who sang of love
    As stolen bits of paradise.
Our views on this, exchanged at length,
    Were coincident and extreme:
"They fool themselves, 'tis passion's joke
    And love itself is but a dream.
How right we are to so agree,
    It must be sad to waken quite;
To find how brief is passion's hour –
    So many days for just one night."

We thought we met to laugh at love,
    And laughing thus the moments flew,
Till I realized in some surprise
    How fleeting went my time with you.
I spoke of this in jesting fear;
    Your silence grew to fill the dark;
My trembling lips could form no word
    Of jilting scorn or light remark.
A sudden knowledge held us mute;
    I raised my eyes to yours above
And felt an ecstasy of pain –
    For it was true, we were in love.

My Heart

Until you came, the
Heart of me
Was just a sleeping
Part of me;
But now it jumps
Inside of me
And beats against the
Hide of me.
It sets me longing
More and more
For tranquil peace I
Knew before.
It's all a thrilling
Part of me,
This yearning, burning
Heart of me –
Yet if you ceased to
Sing love's song,
My heart would still
Keep beating on.

A Thought

A vase of flowers stands but still
To age perceptively,
And I, who tear around all night,
Do age incredibly;
I do not heed what doctors warn,
That this may mean the grave;
Give me champagne a-bubbling now –
The saint dies with the knave.

False Pride

In the rush of each long day,
I should quite forget you;
I should never suddenly
Achingly regret you.

I should bask in celibacy;
All my life be grateful
I was strong that star-filled night,
Virginal and hateful.

I should laud my conscience clear,
Cease to love and miss you;
Strange that I would trade my soul
For the chance to kiss you.

Perversity

No, never try to love me
When I am not of mind,
Or voice your wounded feelings
If I seem most unkind;
Just keep a still long silence,
Nor hint by glance or tear
Betrayed sadistic pleasure
In hurting you, my dear.

There lies in independence
The only certain cure:
Mistrust at night my passion
And scorn by day my lure.
A dreary satisfaction
Is gained without pursuit;
The source of much enjoyment
Is in forbidden fruit.

With Time

The love that you once bore me
    Brought laughter to my eyes,
And little things seemed wondrous –
    I was not worldly wise;
My hair hung to my shoulders,
    My lips were full and red;
I blessed the day I met you
    And followed where you led.

The love that I once bore you
    Was worship undisguised,
But you must now philander
    And you must tell me lies;
So I am now indifferent,
    My hair is snug and high;
I curse the day I met you
    And hate without a sigh.

May It Be

Let it be fate
That I shall meet
A poet, blessed
With dancing feet;

A man who loves
The nightclub's jar,
Yet seeks his hush
Beneath a star;

A lover wise
Yet young and gay,
Whose mirth and verse
Will fill my day.

If I be smart
I'll make him mine,
And change him not
Through all of time.

Break at Dawn

Little bits of sighing,
Wishing you were here;
Little fits of crying,
Longing for you near;
Little words to whisper
Warm against your heart;
Strange that I should feel this
Who was quick to part.

If you hear my sighing
And as sadly yearn,
If you heed my crying
And tonight return;
Darling, hold me closely
At tomorrow's dawn;
You may later waken,
Stir to find me gone.

Between the Sexes

I'm sick of love
Between the sexes,
It leaves me cold
And naught but vexes;
My instincts simply are enraged
When some gal simpers –
"I'm engaged."

I've loved so much,
So very many;
I found they totaled
Not a penny;
And all my interest in the game
Was ever bought
At price of pain.

I donned each love
To wear it gaily,
Bewildered watched
It tarnish daily;
If close at hand or if afar
Each love proved but
A fading star.

I'm sick of love and so alone –
I couldn't reach him on the phone.

The Lesson

You say, "I love you,"
    With such ease
I've grown to fear it
    From your lips;
I've learned to stand
    Aloof and wise
Each time you press
    My fingertips.

And I, who once had
    Found you all
I could desire, whose
    Love was flame;
Have matched your mood
    And curbed each thought
Except to beat you
    At your game.

On Welcoming Death

Yea, Death, bring on your flowers,
Your sad and mournful tunes;
Let Parson eulogize me,
Then rush me to the tombs.
The worms are far too busy
(They work both night and day)
To look with much displeasure on
A beauty in decay.

When love and laughter leave me,
And boredom my despair,
When all my raven tresses
Are white, with none to spare;
When I am shrunken, withered,
(With sick and senile blight)
Yea, Death, arrive most speedily
And banish me from sight.

While in my early twenties
I thought this to be so,
That Death would find me dauntless;
I would most gladly go.
But now that I am eighty,
(Quite active, sane and gay)
I find I'm fond of living on
From day to lovely day.

Just a Woman

Men have built high towers
And flown o'er oceans deep,
Men have broken atoms,
Explored where reptiles sleep;
Men have scaled high mountains
And walked beneath the sea;
Men have founded nations
And written history.

Men have fought great battles
To win the victors' spoils;
Men have lived in power
And sweated from their toils;
Men have ruled a kingdom,
Or carved a face in stone;
I am just a woman
Who needs must write a poem.

All Feminine Spring

Spring, like a wanton
Capricious woman,
Flaunts her thin draperies
In the face of Winter.
Shyly, and with
Tranquil indecision,
She bids him be gone;
Yet he lingers, moved by
Her fragile youth,
Her flirting, mocking air,
Her shining weeping eyes.
She draws him, then retreats
In seductive wilful play;
She is tender, gay, and warm,
Melting fast his icy dignity.
At last, while locked
In a thunderous embrace,
He attempts to assert his will;
But finds his strength is spent
In her false surrender.
Vanquished he lies,
Defeated by an ardor
He could not sustain;
While the wet and smiling mouth
Of sly victorious Spring
Is mirrored in his glazing eyes.

And What Then

If there were not any "ifs,"
And wishes could come true;
If all worry came to naught,
And every sky were blue;
If deceit were never used,
And no one had to lie;
If we were forever young,
And no one had to die;
If each heart held happiness;
If money were unknown;
If each path were smooth and straight,
And not a road of stone;
If to bed we'd go at night
To dream without a care;
If each one were well and strong,
With illness something rare;
If there were no sadness here,
If everything were fun;
Where, my friend, would be the thrill
Of wondering what's to come?

The Willow and I

The wind blew out of the willow tree
And faintly breathed your name;
I raised my face to the soft night wind
And then again it came.

In anguished pain and in grief I cried,
And called aloud to you;
But 'twas the willow caressed my face
As you once used to do.

"A year tonight," sighed the trailing tree,
"His love you laughed away;
You've learned, while longing in bitter rue,
The price that pride must pay."

I could but kneel there in humble shame;
The willow wept to see
A pride so broken and strangely lost
That once had flown so free.

Incidents

Baby beating with a spoon
Hums a plaintive hungry tune;
Baby pulling out the plug
Howls as water leaves the tub;
Sticks his thumb in open socket,
Sits and grinds upon his locket;
Aims a pan at swinging door,
Makes more noise than Hitler's war.
Baby chews his shoes to pulp;
Swallows buttons with a gulp;
Falls from highchair on his head;
Screams from him would wake the dead;
Measles dot his snowy hide;
Mummy threatens suicide.

Penalty of Absence

If you think you'll see him soon,
  True, you cannot wait;
All your senses but demand
  His returning date.

But if absent long he'll be
  You will find the day
When your heart belongs to him
  Who is here to stay.

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Moonlight Lullaby

Dry your tears
And come with me
Where fairies sport at night,
Where beams of gold slant from the moon
And every elfin knight
Is perched upon his cricket steed,
Where frogs play low bass drum;
Where every lady has a lord
No bigger than your thumb.

See the path
Up through the glen,
The fairies know it well;
They promised when I saw them last
One mortal I could tell
How every moonlight night at twelve
The magic ring is clear;
How owls are sentries in the trees
That folkland need not fear.

Do not weep
My little one,
Or dream-time will have flown;
And every woodland sprite will know
In vain the moon has shone.
Oh, much more brilliant than your tears
The stars gleam high above,
And all the fairies wait to crown
You King of my heart's love.

Old House

Old house
I love your walls;
I tread your long and narrow halls
And sit contented in the gloom
Of every oaken paneled room.

Old house,
I know your floors;
They creak as do your heavy doors;
And every tread mark on the stair
Gives token of your friendly wear.

Old house,
How silent grown;
A footstep missed you once had known;
A kindly lined and smiling face
No more your fireside's charm may grace.

Old house,
You softly sigh
And listen for her step as I;
Please speak to me of how she fares
And teach a child to say his prayers.

Prayer on Christmas Eve

Tonight the yuletide years come passing slow
Through memory refreshed by cleansing tears,
And with a heart bereft of Christmas glow
We sit in grief. Those gay and carefree years
We trimmed the tree and all his gifts arrayed,
And waited with a secret childish joy
The morrow, when his shouting glee displayed
His wonder in some new and shining toy.

Material gifts we gave him in our pride,
And selfishly would reap the day's reward;
Old Santa Claus was faithfully described,
But somehow lost – the story of our Lord.
The origin of this day's gentle glow
Was left untold. Yes, even I forgot
That other mother, who so long ago
Was filled with wondrous pride and prayerful thought.

O Mary, seek my son and hold his hand.
As yours, he died for mankind; weary, worn.
Pray tell him now in sweet reflective tone,
Of that first Christmas when a child was born.